

## Can European cities survive within a globalizing world? The coming age of megacities or the growth of globalizing European cities?

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# Can European Cities Survive within a Globalizing World? The Coming Age of Megacities or the Growth of Globalizing European Cities?

*Patrick Le Galès*

This session on megacities and urbanization is no surprise in the German sociological association. Every urban sociologist has to learn its trade through the study of the passionate debates at the start of the twentieth century when Max Weber, Werner Sombart, and Georg Simmel discussed the relationship between cities, culture, arts, technological developments, capitalism and domination. They asked questions about the influence of a particular set of structural social, economic, political, and cultural conditions such as capitalism on the effect of cities or on individual and collective behaviour, modes of thinking, ways of life, cultural creation, and imagination.

In a limited way, we try to follow up that line of argument: Does the rise and rise of globalisation processes, however contradictory and non linear they might be, lead to a new urban form, – the global city, the mega city, the global urban region, the post metropolis? Is this a convergent process in different parts of the world? What are the implications for the European societies? What happens to European cities? This paper is a limited contribution to the debate, part of a research project: this work is a work in progress very much.

From the early days of urbanisation, several conceptions of cities were entangled and sometimes opposed such as the material city of walls, squares, houses, roads, light, utilities, buildings, waste, and physical infrastructure; the cultural city in terms of imaginations, differences, representations, ideas, symbols, arts, texts, senses, religion, aesthetics, the politics and policies of the city in terms of domination, power, government, mobilisation, public policies, welfare, education; the social city of riots, ethnic, economic or gender inequalities, everyday life and social movements; the economy of the city: division of labour, scale, production, consumption, trade etc.

The city as a unit of analysis is always caught between a view which emphasise the diversity, the fragmentation, the strangeness, the encounter with strangers, the mosaics, contingent interactions, moving borders, happenings, fluid situations and identities, events, every day life and the infinity of interactions, complexity by contrast to a perspective which focuses upon integration, domination, assimilation, social order, control, inequalities, unity, models, patterns of capitalist development,

structures, and systems. From Babylon, Athens or Rome, or later Florence, and nowadays so called global cities comes the idea that cities are places where culture flourishes, where civilisation reaches its highest point of complexity and sophistication. The density and diversity of interactions are supposed to stimulate innovations in all sorts of ways, to free urban inhabitants from traditional cultural constraint. Cities are therefore presented in a progressive way, as centers of innovation and culture even if civilisations developed without or beyond the cities first, for instance in Egypt. By contrast, the City is also portrayed as the place of darkness, chaos, violence, riots, exploitation, wild margins, deviance, destruction, and oppression.

This paper begins with the analysis of European cities. European cities were originally mostly cities that represented points of articulation between trade, culture and form of political autonomy. Then, when the nation-state gained a monopoly over organizing culture, political power and different forms of exchange, European cities became integrated into this national whole. Integration meant that the nation-state, which organized the economy, became the main force influencing the future evolution of cities. In terms of social structures: cities were formerly dominated by associations of burghers. The more the city was integrated into the state, the more dominant became those who made it their business to serve the state.

I have argued elsewhere (Le Galès 2002), following Kaelble, Tilly, Therborn, Crouch and Mendras that the long-term meta-stability of the European urban structure has been central regarding the making and development of European societies.<sup>1</sup> This stability goes together with its original structure (the high concentration of medium-sized cities) and the remains of its physical form. European cities (if we set London and Paris apart) although they are gaining more autonomy, are still structured and organized within European states – in particular, welfare states. The ongoing restructuring process does represent a threat, but – for the time being – European cities are supported and to some extent protected by the state, including in terms of resources. European cities are becoming more European, in the sense that the institutionalization of the EU is creating rules, norms, procedures, repertoires, and public policies that have an impact on most, if not all, cities. The EU also is a powerful agent of legitimation. By designing urban public policies and agreeing (under the influence of city interests) to mention the idea of a Europe of

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<sup>1</sup> The perspective on European cities does not aim at conservatism, at the celebration of the myth of the urbanity of the European city – balanced, welcoming, innovative, and dynamic, isolated from any restructuring of the labour market, from globalization processes, social conflicts, re-organized power relations, new forms of domination, deregulation of transport, telecommunications, and energy services, as well as from pollution and from persistent and developing forms of poverty. It is not an attempt to legitimize a European model sheltered within the borders of the illusory ›fortress Europe‹, so that we could more easily ignore what happens around the Mediterranean and in Africa, distance ourselves from the United States, and remain almost unmoved by changes in the faraway lands of Asia or South America. Europe is only a part of the world and it is in the making.

cities» as one of the components of the EU, it is giving a boost to cities to act and to behave as actors within EU governance. This also, to some extent, leads other actors – for instance: firms – to take European cities more seriously. Another point relates to their economic and social structure: European cities are characterized by a mix of public services and private firms, including a robust body of middle class and lower-middle class public sector workers, who constitute a firm pillar of the social structure. Despite increasing social tensions, inequalities, even riots at times. There is no ideal world of European cities but the remains of a less inequal social structure than in most cities in the world. The more important the welfare state and the scale of redistribution (north of Europe), the lesser the level of inequality and poverty. Both the form of the city, the existence of public spaces, the mix of social groups, and despite powerful social segregation mechanisms, one can suggest the idea of continuing sense of «urbanity» still characterizing European cities (Zijderveld 1998). Despite sprawling movements in most European cities, the resistance of the old city centers epitomizes their peculiarity. Lévy takes the example of large public collective transport (in particular the tramway) together with pedestrian areas and cycling paths to demonstrate the remaining strength of the idea of European city. Finally, there is a continuing representation of the city as a whole, Colin Crouch (1999) suggests a «Durkheimian» view of the city which still exists in Europe. The increased legitimacy of political urban elites sustains and re-invents this presentation. European cities are still strongly regulated by public authorities and complex arrangement of public and private actors. European cities appear to be relatively robust, despite pressures from economic actors, individuals, and states (including welfare states) being reshaped within the European Union. Processes of exclusion, strengthening and transformation of inequalities, segregation, and domination are also unfolding in these cities. The development of residential suburbs separated from the city and of polycentric cities, the isolation of disadvantaged districts, the development of cultural complexes, leisure facilities and shopping centers, as well as diverse cultural models and migrations, all clearly demonstrate the pressures exerted on the traditional medium-sized city. Finally – and this point is vital to my analysis – actors within cities have been strongly mobilized to direct the future of cities.

Yet, focusing on European cities nowadays goes hand in hand with analysis of forms of interdependence between scales, between levels of government, multilevel strategies of social actors and linkages between forms of mobility and local societies. It would be a vain exercise to work on European cities without applying oneself at all to the global strategies of major firms from private developers to utilities and leisure firms, to the transnational communities that weave links on both sides of the Mediterranean or towards the Rast, to the competition rules drawn up and then imposed in the European Union context, or to the restructuring of welfare states. We must first come through national perspectives on cities, and then compare

European cities with cities on other continents, including in terms of the dissemination of models.

European cities make a fairly general category of urban space, relatively original forms of compromise, aggregation of interest and culture which brings together local social groups, associations, organised interests, private firms and urban governments. The pressures created by property developers, major groups in the urban services sector, and cultural and economic globalization processes, provoke re-actions and adaptation processes of actors within European cities, defending the idea of a fairly particular type of city that is not yet in terminal decline. The modernized myth of the European city remains a very strongly mobilized resource, and is strengthened by growing political autonomy and transverse mobilizations. However debateable and contested, the point on the strength and originality of the European cities model has been made. The question remains, what happens next?

By contrast, some authors in the urban studies field – economists and geographers in particular – tend to suggest an alternative scenario: that the rise of global or megacities is unavoidable. Rogowski has gone on to propose an exercise somewhat in the style of Zipf's Law (established in 1941), which pointed out that, on average and in a large number of countries, a country's second city had about half the number of inhabitants that the biggest city had, that its third city had about a third of the largest population, the fourth a quarter etc. After some decades of European integration and the continuous removal of trade barriers and obstacles to the movement of goods and people, the European Union should reach a spatial equilibrium. (Rogowski suggests a period of fifty years for this.) By applying Zipf's Law, he deduces that there will be a megalopolis of 21 million inhabitants and several conurbations of three million people, as there are today; but above all he predicts a decline by half in the number of urban agglomeration with one to three million inhabitants and in the number of smaller cities i.e. the break-up of the core of urban Europe:

»Of cities like Amsterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Lisbon, Liverpool, Lyons, Manchester, Marseilles, Munich, Naples, Newcastle, Nuremberg, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Turin and Vienna, half must either grow or decline: expanding to become one of the six or seven European urban giants, or declining into provincial insignificance (...). The carnage will likely be most pronounced among the mid-sized cities of Germany and the United Kingdom.«

## 1. Cities, Metropolis, Megacities

A good body of the urban sociology literature has developed upon the analysis of the metropolis by contrast to the old European city, a major theme for the founding fathers of Sociology from Durkheim to Weber.

For observers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (and Simmel in particular), the development of large cities, metropolis is a major phenomenon, both in Europe and then in the United States. Capital cities benefited from the consolidation of states, the shift of political life onto the national level, and the strengthening of the states' and therefore the bureaucracies' (including the army's) capacity for control, as well as from industrial development and colonization. These major cities absorbed a large part of the flow of migration, thus providing sizeable reserves of labor. They were the first beneficiaries of the transport revolution, from tramways to road and rail networks. Open to the world in an era that saw increasing numbers of different kinds of exchanges, discoveries, and technical innovations, they established their role by organizing universal exhibitions and great fairs. Concerned with public health and safety, governments organized major improvement works, created wide avenues and constructed new public buildings: stations, squares and monuments that symbolized their dynamism and technical progress. These cities were also places of speculation, of public and private investment in housing, and of financial capital. Their cultural influence changed scale because of more rapid diffusion, transports and colonial empires. London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna in particular were the theaters of extraordinary physical and cultural transformations. As university cities and cultural centers, they were the focus of unrest and the sites of the political and social revolts that punctuated the nineteenth century. The great metropolis became the site of consumption, of department stores and wide avenues, of overstimulation that changed the urban cultural experience. This led also to physical transformation with ever increasing diffusion of urbanization around those large metropolises, hence the rise of suburbs, either working class ones as the red belt in Paris or bourgeois suburbs where middle classes abandoned the center.

The rise of the large metropolis became an American feature: New York and Chicago and later Los Angeles in particular gradually replaced European cities in the urban imagination of the modernist metropolis. They grew thanks to stunning economic development and massive immigration.

Urbanization is reaching a new high in the contemporary world with the rise of mega cities beyond eight million inhabitants such as Calcutta, Los Angeles, Cairo, Tokyo, New York, Bombay or Seoul. Beyond the modern metropolis, researchers try to make sense of those large urban areas: »Mega cities«, »postmetropolis«, »global cities«, and »global city-regions«. Processes of globalization, including transnational migration architecture, financial transactions, transport flux, or dissemina-

tion of technological innovations contribute to the rise of mega cities in different parts of the globe. The traditional ideas of the city, the modern metropolis or the industrial city are now associated or replaced by contradictory images of those mega cities where one either emphasizes cultural diversity and an infinite range of interactions or the strength of control and capital accumulation by dominant groups. The rise of mobility and transnational flux within more globalized capitalist cities raise new issues about assimilation, social order, politics and culture in cities. Cities are reshaped by local groups and culture, interacting, adapting or protesting against globalized flows.

In the literature, the question of the megacity (or global cities, or global city regions) is related to issues of globalization. We are now of course all aware that globalization processes represent more than one form of globalization (Wallerstein 2000). As David Harvey (1989) put it, globalization is a project, a process and a condition.

The globalization literature takes as its starting point the proliferation of interactions and flows on increasingly distant scales, facilitated by technological changes, which has contributed to the emerging consideration of a world perceived as a whole. Although there are many difficulties in accounting for these processes, one may distinguish the neo-liberal political project to extend the rule of the market from the impact of social processes – the rhetoric of uniform domination by markets versus diversity of cultures. Globalization processes are contested, varied and very unequally advanced as between one sector and another or one place and another (Held et al. 1999).

From that, we can now move to the different urban form associated to the globalisation process, i.e. global cities, mega cities, global city regions. The argument is usually that some aspects of globalization lead to the making of a dominant urban form. However from a sociological point of view, there is not much to identify a particular category of cities beyond descriptive issues of size and networks. Beyond issues of density, connection and size, or more sophisticated version of agglomeration effects, there is no reason to argue that mega cities or global cities are a different kind of fish from middle-sized cities. Difference of degree rather than difference of nature seems to be the name of the game rather than the reification of »new megacities«.

### Megacities

The basic divide in the literature opposes a more social conception of global cities analysed with the tools of social science and the term mega-cities, which is coming from the UN and the more descriptive geographical literature.

If cities are defined in terms of size, it follows that some social, economic, cultural phenomena, processes, and structures, should be identified in that class of cities comprising Tokyo, Shanghai, Karachi, Cairo and New York. From a sociological point of view, the basis for comparison remains to be seen. In order to analyse dynamics of Megacities by contrast to European cities, a few points of clarification are required.

#### *Megacities as Large Cities*

The idea of the large cities becoming a dominant form is not so new, one could for instance trace the idea in the work of English planners. A simple definition of Megacities is about the size and world cities about the function they perform (Lo/Yeung 1998). According to official documents from the United Nations, megacities are defined by a population higher than eight million inhabitants. The term Hypercities is sometimes used for cities beyond 20 million inhabitants. Others point to the rise of gigantic urban corridors such as the East coast of the US, the California coast, the Pearl river or the Tokyo Osaka link.

Most observers question the analytical power of that category and point by contrast to third world megacities. In the developing world, population growth and rural migration remain the key engines of population growth of those megacities leading to what Mike Davis calls the »Planet of slums« (2004).

#### *World Cities*

Peter Hall (1966) and his descriptive analysis of world cities in the 1960's started from a different point of departure. He analysed world cities as part of a world system, focusing on them as center of economic activities, financial networks, political power, transport network etc.

Describing and ranking world cities (including European cities among them) has become a full time job. Beyond classic demographic indicator (see for instance the database Geopolis or the figures from the UN), geographers have taken a more sophisticated view in order to identify the economic power concentrated in large cities (headquarters of firms for instance) or the role as node of networks, connections and flows (Beaverstock et al. 2000).<sup>2</sup>

The University of Loughborough »Globalization and world cities study group and network« has produced a wealth of research to provide relational data to identify world cities within a hierarchy of cities, within a world city network analysed in

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<sup>2</sup> See the work of the university of Loughborough and the series of working paper: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc>.



terms of dependence and interdependence. Peter J. Taylor in particular, in his different texts on world and global cities has emphasised that he does not study a world »of largely equal cities«. Rather in the world system research tradition he emphasises hierarchies, networks and interdependence, connections between cities. »World city network formation is the result of the locational policies of major service firms creating global office networks to service their global clients« (Taylor 2004), hence an empirical research programme on different dimensions of these sites and networks.

### *Global Cities*

Following John Friedmann's early intuition (1986) and the acclaimed book of Saskia Sassen »Global cities«, a whole range of researchers have tried to identify global cities as a particular type of cities which are particular to the new phase of capitalism in the new millennium (heavy emphasis on »new«).

Classic definitions of »global cities« describe them in terms of their central and command role in the global economy, in exchange flows – flows of travellers and of merchandise, and as headquarters of the largest firms and of cultural and political institutions, banks, and insurance companies: in other words, on the basis of their functions and their power to exert economic and political influence. Thus, growth in exchanges of goods and persons, which has accelerated since the 1970s, gives cities at the heart of these exchanges a special position. The development of multinational and then global firms means the concentration of economic power within these firms, which establish their headquarters – and therefore the power of highly aggregated economic command – in a small number of very large metropolises. These metropolises are thus integrated into the most globalized part of the economy, which gives them a special role. Sassen (1991, 2001) goes further, first and foremost by stressing that the dynamic of economic globalization requires capacities for control and co-ordination, which are changing scale. First and foremost for Sassen, Global cities are command and control centers. Global cities are cities within which these modes of control and co-ordination are organized, giving such cities increasingly extensive influence. Above all, global cities have an original dynamic of producing innovations for the leading services of capitalism – financial and legal services, consultancy, and communication. The global city is a particular environment, producing specialized, innovative services that enable co-ordination and control of the globalized economy, thanks to the concentration of global firms' headquarters and of these services. For Sassen, the dispersal of activities increases the need in the global city for a social and economic environment that can produce its own codes and its own culture, thus contributing to co-ordination. She deduces from this that there is a new social structure, distinguished by the concentration of

social groups involved in the global city dynamic, who need a whole set of professional and domestic services: hence the proliferation of low-paid, insecure workers cleaning offices, providing various domestic services, and staffing restaurants and cafés. This dual structure is characteristic of advanced capitalism and the global cities that are its command centers: New York, London, Tokyo, and, to a lesser extent, Los Angeles, Paris and Frankfurt.<sup>3</sup>

Most of this work concentrates on some specific economic sectors, telecommunication, finances, increasingly media and all advanced services organized within international networks.

*Megacities: Manuel Castells »Flux of Networks«*

In Castells, The space of flows he identifies is first and foremost a flux of information supported by the high tech infrastructures. Megacities are not defined in terms of size but in terms of nodes within ever increasing diverse networks although at the end he points to classic cases defined by size (see Taylor 1999). His definitions are precise:

»Thus, the global city phenomenon cannot be reduced to a few urban cores at the top of the hierarchy. It is a process that connects advanced services, producers centers, and markets in a global network with different intensity and at different scale depending upon the relative importance of the activities located in each area vis à vis the global network.« (Taylor 1999, vol.1: 380)

Again:

»The new global economy and the emerging informational society has indeed a new spatial form, which develops in a variety of social and geographical contexts: megacities. Megacities are first very large agglomerations for human beings. But size is not their defining quality. They are the nodes of the global economy, concentrating the directional productive and managerial upper functions all over the planet: the control of the media; the real politics of power; and the symbolic capacity to create and diffuse messages. ... Megacities articulate the global economy, link up the informational networks, and concentrate the world's power. It is this distinctive feature of being globally connected and locally disconnected, physically and socially that makes megacities a new urban form.« (Taylor 1999, vol. 1: 403)

*Megacities: the Global City Region*

In his edited volume »Global city regions«, Allen J. Scott sets the map for what he sees as the emerging geographical trend related to globalisation i.e. the rise of global city-regions, »nodes (...) distinctive social formations whole local characters and

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<sup>3</sup> For a short version of the global city model and the difference with the global city region, see Sassen, Global cities and global city regions, a comparison (Scott 2001).

dynamics are undergoing major transformations due to the impact of globalization« (Scott 2001: 1). The idea is to analyse those social formations both as spatial nodes of the global economy and also as political actors in the making on the world stage.

Their development is related first to the pressure and incentives of globalization trends. They are seen as the new motors of the global economy: issues of competitiveness are central to this notion. They result from the amalgamation of existing localities, to construct interterritorial organisations for collective actions, which are more or less functionally dependent. Some can be organised around a major urban center as in the classic model of the metropolis, some may be the network of urban centers (Delta metropolis in Holland) others may go over regional boundaries such as Copenhagen Malmö or San Diego Tijuana. The basic argument behind this version of the mega city is from economic geography: those global city regions are the center of a dense network of trans-national firms, they »thrive on the productivity – an innovation enhancing effect of dense and multifaceted urban milieus that are simultaneously embedded in worldwide distribution networks« (ibid.: 4). Administrative boundaries are of course becoming irrelevant.

The rise of global city regions, both in the rich part of the world and within developing countries is first and foremost an economic driven phenomenon for two reasons analysed by Allen J. Scott and Michael Storper in their previous work: firstly, concentration of economic activities reduces transaction cost, and provides an insurance for flexibility, an overall efficiency and secondly, urban city regions allow the concentration of learning processes, innovation, creativity, and dissemination within all sorts of networks.

In that brand of literature, global city regions are socially characterized by three outcomes of those globalization processes: cultural and demographic heterogeneity (related for instance to large scale immigration); the polycentric or polyclustered morphology of the agglomeration (including negative impact of the quality of life, lack of services) and the widening gap between the richest and the poorest, rising level of social and spatial segregation (dual city trend). All this leads to rising problems of governance. Basically, rapid economic development and drive towards economic efficiency leads to increasing social and political problems. At the end of the day however, the important point remains that megacities are complex of diverse knowledge supporting innovation and economic development.

*Economic/Technology Driven Convergence or Rise of the Undetermined Chaotic Urban World*

Altogether, this is quite an impressive set of arguments. It is quite striking that most of the explanation related to the rise of megacities is mainly an economy-driven change, sometimes in the Marxist functionalist tradition but without the clarity and

the analytical power of David Harvey's work for instance who is far more cautious and precise about the rise of megacities or global cities of various sort.

There is a feeling of »déjà vu« in those analysis. Again, the stress on the decisive influence of globalized capitalism on social structures, modes of government, and urban policies or a particular sector (finance) or new technologies of information and communication cannot but raise some doubts.

This tradition convergence for economic and technological reason is well alive and constitutes an important body on research about global cities (Sassen 1991), metropolis and flows (Castells 1996). In his account, Castells offers the explanation that the same forces produce the same effects, despite the fact that cities everywhere in the world are being restructured in ways integral to their particular stories. In the same vein, in a section entitled »The fading charm of European cities« he confirms the marginalization of European cities, with the exception of London, as they are not among the twenty biggest cities in the world.

However, if the urban is growing everywhere, then it either reflects a vague general pattern or there are different types of urban models of cities, which may differentiate, being different types of social, political, cultural, economic structures. That does not exclude, that all those models will follow the same path. For instance, given the longevity of European cities, it is possible to envisage that the general trends of social change are being expressed in an original way, combined with existing structures and with the strategies of actors in European cities. The point here is not to undermine the powerful transformations associated to the development of current capitalism but, in the sociological tradition, to insist on the role of social groups, institutions, states, and their power struggle in the making of society. Contrary to what some of these authors suggest, the issue is not only that of »all power to global firms« but also of taking into account conflicts of authority, the interplay of social groups, and control mechanisms – in other words, the particular division of labour between the market, social structures, and political structures.

Following the little detour of the first section, I'll drop the word »megacities« altogether which is even more obviously lacking conceptual clarity than any other term. The »global-city-region« has many precise useful features but is too characterised in economic terms. For the discussion of the second section, we'll keep the language of world cities/global cities.

## 2. So what for Europe? Dynamic Globalising Cities rather than the Rise and Rise of World/Global Cities

Let's go back to our initial set of questions: How to characterize European larger cities? Are they different from the rest of medium sized European cities? Are they ever expanding? Do they essentially compare to other world/global/megacities? Is the structure of European cities going to disappear at the expense of the classic structure of European cities? Last but not least, taking a European viewpoint, is there something special about those world cities and what is it for instance in the case of London or Paris? At this stage, the argument will be based upon current research on the Paris example.

### A Different Category of City? Difference of Degree or a Difference of Nature

What makes those world cities different from medium sized European cities, and does it matter? The argument here suggests that, in the European context, the difference between world or global cities and the rest of European cities is more a difference of degree than a difference of nature: there are more people, more networks, more contradictions, more diverse social and ethnic groups, more advanced services, more poverty, larger infrastructures, more powerful economic actors and more political fragmentation. Most characteristics are however also to be found in medium sized European cities, either in a less marked form or at a later stage. In other words, most of the characteristics associated to global cities or megacities are to be found, to a lesser degree in European cities, which are also adapting to globalisation trends.

### Economic Development: more than the Global Cities

Most of the research on *megacities* and global city regions, in a different sense of the word, takes for granted the fact that the future of cities and the key engine behind urbanization processes lies in the powerful globalization processes. There is also an assumption according to which cause global city regions or world cities are large and growing, they are crucial for economic growth.

The dynamic of metropolization is conventionally explained by costs, logic and by the effects of externality. The vertical and horizontal disintegration of firms and the development of various forms of cellular-network organization render the firm dependent on numerous externalities, with slightly higher transaction costs. These cost-related reasons explain the dynamic of firms clustering in metropolises. Under

the impact of competition, of new exchange and production organizations, and of the increasingly relational constituent element of competitiveness, firms need the resources produced by territories, yet they also need to integrate themselves into environments characterized by great diversity, by the production of innovations, and by varied forms of co-operation. In other words, they simultaneously need more market and more non-market relations and synergies. For Storper (1997), such non-market-led forms of interdependence are precisely a fundamental characteristic of certain industries and services and of certain territories, and this fosters the dynamic of territorialization. These competitive collective goods and these non-market-led forms of interdependence are situated and mobilized in different territories: however, cities, and notably the largest metropolis, are the privileged terrain for their production and distribution. Destabilized by competition and changing forms of organization, firms are looking for territories within which they can quickly alter their strategies and their forms of co-operation. Cities offer »flexibility guarantees«, to use Veltz's expression, there firms can find partners for sophisticated competition/co-operation games, as well as services and sizeable, differentiated labour markets. However, should the need arise, firms want to be able to pull out as fast as possible and without any difficulty.

Most relational analysis of world/global cities stresses the concentration of command and control functions. In Europe, that also applies to London, Paris and to a lesser extent a few other ones.

What is the real impact of this on the economic development. In France and Britain analysis of economic growth and productivity has pointed on the increasing gap between London, Paris and the rest of the country in two dimensions. Firstly, as mentioned by the global cities thesis, the rise of advanced services, i.e. services to firms including financial services are much more important in London and Paris than in the rest of the country. However, in the French case, the INSEE analysis of those services and jobs over a longer period stress that the growth pattern of those advanced services is the same in Paris and in the other main French cities.

There are more of them in Paris, and the phenomenon started earlier in the Paris urban region but the trend is the same, looking like a pattern of diffusion (within cities beyond 200.000 inhabitants). The more advanced among the advanced services are more concentrated in Paris but again it may be a question of time before they diffuse to other cities.

The second element – pointed out by researchers – relates to the increased productivity gap between Paris and France, London and Britain. The pattern is similar in both cases. In France, the Paris urban areas represent about 20 percent of the French population but 30 percent of the GDP. The gap has increased over the last two decades, but more with the other regions than with other cities. The productivity gap between the main cities and the rest of the regions has also increased. These

findings (Davezies 2001) echo directly the work on global city regions. However, the role of welfare state redistribution mechanism has led over several decades to the decline of inequalities in terms of revenue per inhabitant. Welfare states are therefore essential to prevent the gap, at least in revenue, between the most dynamic cities and the rest. The scale of redistribution reinforces the point that however global cities might be in the European context they remain set within a national political framework.

One question remains however on the urban form leading to those results. It might be that dense networks of medium size cities around a city such as Milan or the Delta metropolis in the Netherlands could lead to similar types of economic results. The mechanisms are not all that clear and *there is no reason why there should be one best way*.

This brief analysis does not address directly the question of the dismantling of the European system, the carnage of medium sized cities under the pressure of trade and global capitalism networks. Nevertheless, two points might be suggested in relation to this argument. Firstly, medium size European cities are globalizing as well. Many trends identified in the global city context actually take place at the level of medium size cities, often later or to a lesser extent. Secondly, the largest metropolises in Europe, London and Paris are the cores of their respective national economy. The productivity gap with the rest of the country is increasing as is the gap between medium size cities and the rest of the regions. There is clearly an intensification of metropolization processes and growth, which is more advanced in the large metropolis. As Klaus R. Kunzmann (1998) notes however, the only large world cities in Europe, Paris and London are not growing fastly. Indeed, their growth is relative but less important than many medium sized cities, in France in particular. The European context is made of few declining cities, many dynamic medium size and large cities, and two dynamic large global cities, whatever that means. For the time being, there is not much to justify the decline of European cities or to explain that the European urban systems prevent stronger economic growth.

What remains unclear is the extent to which there is a direct link between the concentration of headquarters, networks of various sorts, advanced services, diverse skilled professionals, knowledge complex and economic development or in other words, is there a clear size effect which has some impact on the rate of economic development? It may be the case that global city regions are the genuine motor of economic growth and that they have a major comparative advantage. It may also be the case that different patterns of metropolization may lead to the same result because the combination of network, mobility, diffusion of innovation can take a different form. The density of medium sized cities in Europe may be a functional equivalent for those factors identified in the global city regions to the concentration

within a large metropolis. Some of the debate is a bit rhetorical when it concentrates on size and the location of network. Access and mobility are also central. Links between German cities or Paris and regional capitals (around two hours journey for instance) are equivalent to a drive from the East to the West of Los Angeles for instance. It may be the case that there is a distinct type and rate of economic development in the global/world cities, but that is still an open debate, at least within the European context. One suspects the dream of »one best way« which is often implicit in regional economist literature.

### Social Structure, Culture

We do not know much about the sociological analysis of world/global cities. What does it mean for the socialization of actors, for social mobility, for the making of social groups, what happens in particular in those types of cities compared to the other ones? This is still a field of research where we lack robust sociological analysis.

Most literature on global cities rightly stresses increased inequalities. Is there a dual social structure? This section argues that in the European context there is evidence of increased polarization but no disappearance of middle strata and that is also the case in most cities.

»Polarization« refers to a process by which the poles of the richest and the poorest are reinforced at the expense of the middle of society, in terms of society's various inequalities (occupation, income, social mobility, and consumption). In urban sociology terms, this polarization can be observed spatially, in the reinforcement of the wealth of the richest areas and the poverty of the poorest areas. Beyond an inadequate »dual city« model, areas of intense poverty and areas of intense wealth exist and are increasing within cities, thus recreating a mosaic of spatial inequalities and conflicts.

As argued by Sassen or Scott or Storper, the rise of advanced services in the global city regions or global cities lead to specialised labour markets, i.e. the rise of specialised professional middle classes, managers, and experts with high wages. One of the impacts of the globalisation trend is to provide more opportunities for skilled social groups and to increase their scale of operation. In most global cities, therefore, one can notice the increase of incomes for the elite part of the population, in terms of skills in particular. Clear evidence of that trend has been found by Préteceille (2004) for Paris, by Buck, Gordon, Hall, Harloe and Kleinman (2002) for London.

Classic definitions of »global cities« describe them in terms of their central role in exchange flows – flows of travellers and of merchandise, and as headquarters of the



largest firms and of cultural and political institutions, banks, and insurance companies: in other words, on the basis of their functions and their power to exert economic and political influence. Thus, growth in exchange of goods and persons, which has accelerated since the 1970s, gives cities at the heart of these exchanges a special position. The development of multinational and then global firms means the concentration of economic power within these firms, which establish their headquarters – and therefore the power of highly aggregated economic command – in a small number of very large metropolises. These metropolises are thus integrated into the most globalized part of the economy, which gives them a special role. Sassen (1991) goes further, first and foremost by stressing that the dynamic of economic globalization requires capacities for control and co-ordination, which are changing scale. Global cities are cities within which these modes of control and co-ordination are organized, giving such cities increasingly extensive influence. Above all, global cities have an original dynamic of producing innovations for the leading services of capitalism (financial and legal services, consultancy, and communication). The global city is a particular environment, producing specialized, innovative services that enable co-ordination and control of the globalized economy, thanks to the concentration of global firms' headquarters and of these services. For Sassen, the dispersal of activities increases the need in the global city for a social and economic environment that can produce its own codes and its own culture, thus contributing to co-ordination. She deduces from this that there is a new social structure, distinguished by the concentration of social groups involved in the global city dynamic, who need a whole set of professional and domestic services: hence the proliferation of low-paid, insecure workers cleaning offices, providing various domestic services, and staffing restaurants and cafés. This dual structure is characteristic of advanced capitalism and the global cities that are its command centers: New York, London, Tokyo, and, to a lesser extent, Los Angeles, Paris and Frankfurt.

In these conditions, the global city could be said to constitute an original social structure. However, in this regard, Chris H. Hamnett's work on London and Edmond Préteceille's on Paris invalidate the thesis. Both confirm the dynamic of growth, of rise and of segregation of the most privileged groups, but do not detect either an accentuation of polarization or the decline of the middle strata. The role of the welfare state, even in London and the Paris region, contributes to the strength of middle strata, particularly when the welfare state remains strong. Again there is not much systematic evidence. Poverty has been on the rise in most cities but the evidence in terms of dual structure of social segregation is more nuanced. Strong evidence of social segregation in London and Paris (Butler/Robson 2003), Préteceille (2004) go together with evidence of continuum between social and spatial segregation, not dualisation. Of course, spatial segregation processes are more marked in the largest metropolises, because of the concentration of higher-status

groups but Préteceille (2000) has rightly noted that social segregation may sometimes be more marked in medium-sized cities.

The changes of scale in society are partly linked to transformations of capitalism and to the pressure of market logics. The dynamism of transnational networks and the distance of these interactions seem to be growing constantly. The theoreticians of culturalism and mobility take the view that the dual impact of transnational networks and of flows of images, information and people are making national societies less capable of structuring the representations and social practices of individuals (Urry 2000). These transnational networks increase interdependence between national societies. From this perspective, European integration is accelerating trends that can also be observed in other contexts. The more qualified and mobile middle classes in urban societies are – if only to a limited extent – the more they are becoming disembedded from national societies.

Culture, representations, social movements (including environmental and human rights movements), and capitalism – or at least, the vanguard forces of these processes – are exiting the nation-states. Sklair in particular suggests the emergence of a new social class, a mobile global bourgeoisie, which can change country and thus avoid the constraints of national societies, and he defines it as »an international bourgeoisie: a socially comprehensive category, encompassing the entrepreneurial elite, managers of firms, senior state functionaries, leading politicians, members of the learned professions (...) plus the media, culture, consumption« (1995: 62; 2000). This new bourgeoisie speaks English, and has learned the codes that operate within Anglo-American firms, universities, and consultancies; it is developing a common global culture and particular consumption practices. This global society is apparently organized less on the basis of major conflicts and more on the basis of professional networks, with norms and models of excellence driven from within the professions – by consultants, legal specialists, managers, university academics, doctors, accountants, bankers, and advertising executives.

These processes, however limited, have important repercussions for social groups within the cities, many of whom are simply not part of the story. By contrast, individuals and groups that have the resources to play the game on the European or global scale and develop different forms of competence, expertise, or specialized products see opportunities opening up. These individuals and groups have a capacity for exit that, although it is partial and limited, exerts strong pressures on urban societies, and may potentially reduce interdependence between social groups within a national society or within a city, or may help to mobilize a spatial interest that reflects their interests – a city against the state, for instance. It could be in the interest of these elites to disengage totally or partially from national societies and to plot their individual or collective trajectory inside globalized professional networks and particular territories that are favourable to them. These groups, as mentioned

before, are mostly located within the larger cities, their impact is felt in terms of use of public space, consumption pattern, leisure, but not only in the largest cities. Again, the dynamics of metropolization and globalisation attain most cities, even if the largest are first or mostly concerned.

However, those global cities, within their national context seem to play the role of accelerator of social mobility. Savage and his colleagues, working on the South West of England, analyzed this labour market as an accelerator of social mobility. There are similar fragments of evidence for the Paris region, which every year attracts and rejects important groups of population, attracting and keeping the more educated, more specialised, more successful groups. The data on earnings go into the same direction but more should be known on the subject and the extent to which there is a significant difference with cities like Milan, Madrid, Munich or Manchester or smaller ones. One should distinguish the effect for the national social structure and the European or global hierarchies in different professions. Also, according to the set of theorists just mentioned, those social groups are more globalized, more mobile and their relationship to the neighborhood, the city is different.<sup>4</sup> Savage and his colleagues have developed the concept of »elective belonging« to analyze those relationships. Our ongoing work on the Paris Ile de France region (with Préteceille and Oberti) also suggests it is probably fruitful to disentangle the different aspects of belonging to a neighborhood or a city in relation to investment and social practices. Instead of sharp models of middle class secession, there are all ranges of combination, which may or may not be similar in the global cities, the megapolis and the medium-cities cities.

Briefly, the same conclusion applies to the rise of migration. Every European country has seen waves of immigration, frequently a long time ago, with their geographical origins often linked to a colonial empire: Pakistan, India, the Caribbean, and central Africa for the UK; Indonesia and Surinam for the Netherlands; Italy, Poland, Spain, Portugal, then Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Black Africa for France; Turkey for Germany.

For the traditional countries of immigration in Europe, the percentage of the population from abroad varies from five to ten percent in the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, Belgium, and Austria. More favourable legal provisions and an unemployment rate that remained low during the 1980s have made Sweden the European country with the highest proportion of people from abroad (11.5%). In contrast, immigration is a recent phenomenon in southern Europe, where the rate remains below two percent. For the European Union, border closure policies have meant that the flow of immigration into Europe has stabilized at a level that is not

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<sup>4</sup> See the excellent two books by Butler about middle classes on London, and the forthcoming book of Savage/Bagnall/Longhurst (2004), *Globalisation and Belongings*, London, Sage.

very high and includes the immigration movements of highly skilled individuals, which somewhat blur the image of an immigrant. The high density and wide variety of immigrant populations is more a distinctive characteristic of the largest European cities, notably London, Paris but also Frankfurt (25%), Rotterdam (20%), Brussels (just under 30% of the city center population), and Stockholm. However, immigrant populations in medium-sized European cities increased with the growth of European cities during the »Thirty Glorious Years« from 1947 to 1976 and again from the 1980s, as well as with the increased diversity of their countries of origin. Although not a large-scale phenomenon, the presence of populations from abroad has become the norm for medium-sized European cities, even though, of course, there are wide variations. Ports such as Liverpool, Rotterdam, Marseilles, Genoa and Naples, for example, are cities that have long played host to immigrant populations. This means that, although cities that are now called »globak« are distinguished by a wide variety and high density of populations from abroad, medium-sized European cities are also affected, if to a lesser extent.

What are the implications for European cities? Most of what has been analysed is more visible and seemed more obvious in the larger cities, in London in particular than in the rest of European cities. The concentration of the trend underlined seems to be clear although there is lack of clear comparable empirical data to be sure. However, most European cities are also concerned by segregation, rising more mobile middle classes, migration, cultural diversity social exclusion. From a sociological point of view, there is not much of a particular social structure to identify the global cities. The main point remains a question of scale, of concentration and diversity of groups which makes it a more difficult question of integration, and aggregation of interest.

## Conclusion

There is no evidence so far of the making of a megacity within the European context beyond the cases of London and Paris. If one brings together series of cities in England, in the Netherlands, Benelux or the North of Germany, there is always the possibility to »discover« other megacities – but that does not change the existing framework. For the time being, there is no particular rapid growth of Paris or London at the expense of European medium size cities. The scenario of »obsolete European cities«, is not on the card, for now.

Most trends characterising global cities are also taking place in most European cities. There is little evidence to suggest that, in the European context, global or world cities are a particular category of cities beyond the concentration of networks,

headquarters, more diverse interests, more ethnic minorities fragmentation. Briefly, the politics of world or global cities is also difficult to identify. Eckhart or Wilk-Heeg attempts to identify the main feature comes out with: the importance of economic interest, the role of infrastructure and protest movement, the pressure on economic development policies on housing, planning or welfare, the politics of urban projects (Moulaert et al. 2003). In Europe, urban flagship projects are emblematic of this desire of cities to re-affirm their importance and to take their place in European and globalized networks, as witnessed by the rebuilding of the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin or the regeneration of the London Docklands, but that is also true, possibly to a lesser extent, in other cities. The contradictions of capitalism are more marked in global cities, there are more interests, less capacity to integrate, and a fragmented governance (Préteceille 2000; Scott 2002).

Does this lead to something else? There is not yet much research on various effects of globalization (or europeanisation, mobility etc.) on urban social structures, hence lots of questions about the »megacities« or its equivalent from a sociological point of view.

However, the impact of rising trade, exchange, and economic restructuring will increase with the European enlargement, accompanied by the policies of one of the first neo liberal commission. Will Europe keep its model of limited inequalities, territorialisation (structure of medium size cities) and economic development or, as suggested by some economists, will this European model be dismantled by the pressure of economic forces? Still early days to conclude.

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